

4 November 2020

Service Manager's Annual Report.

Once again it is my pleasure to be reporting to you on the events of this last financial year. With the interruptions of Covid-19 it has been a year like no other. Despite this, the GSS Team has shown spirit and commitment through the ups and downs of the year and has continued to deliver our much needed service to the community.

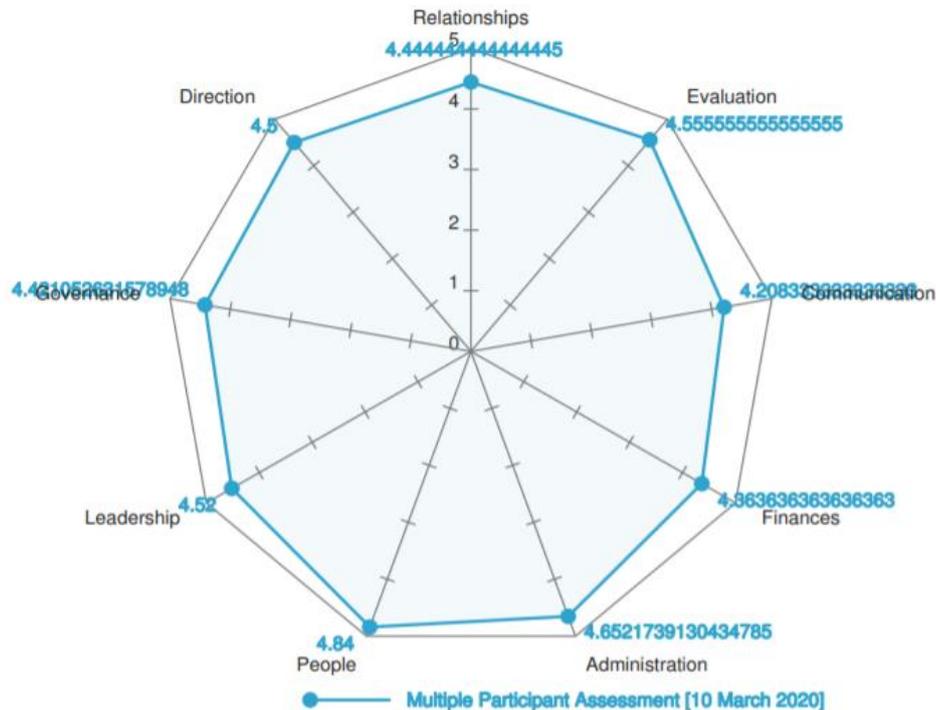
All staff worked from their homes during lockdown, offering clients phone and zoom sessions. It was a time of a sharp learning curve which was fortunately helped by a 'zoom' tutorial being made available during the first weekend of lockdown. It also meant changes to procedures and ways of completing paperwork that impacted on both counselling and administrative staff and highlighted our strengths in thinking outside of the square and being resourceful. There was a mix of responses from clients to the zoom / phone offer with some people preferring to put things on hold until after lockdown, and more people opting for phone sessions than zoom sessions. Zoom has become an option for clients now with a small number of people preferring this choice even after level restrictions have been lifted. While it isn't straight forward to gauge if we are seeing more people due to the effects of Covid-19, it is apparent that the distress a lot of clients are suffering is being compounded by the effects of Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions.

The disruptions to our service delivery did not only come in the form of Covid-19 but with a lot of banging and thumping as the building we work from went through a major revamp over several weeks for earthquake strengthening and as the shop below us was redesigned. These conditions were less than ideal and our clients and staff were very generous and patient putting up with such intrusion into their counselling and working spaces.

The Board and I were delighted that half way through this year a proposal we had put to the BOPDHB to extend our postvention services was accepted. This has allowed us to employ two people to job-share one new FTE. They are tasked with setting up new services for people bereaved by suicide including support groups in the Western Bay of Plenty and developing a team of people with lived experience of loss to suicide to become Suicide Loss Support peers for others suffering loss to suicide.

The increase in staff numbers and the requirement for two new rooms provided an opportunity for changes to our room configurations and our admin office, waiting room and staffroom/meeting room now occupy more appropriate spaces for meeting their different functions.

During the year the agency participated in an on-line self-assessment survey via NZ Navigator, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. The results can be seen in the graph below.



We have stay connected to the community by attending events and meetings, sending emails and newsletters; and by holding our annual Memorial Service - remembering lives lost to suicide, which was held on a wild day in September last year. Our theme for the service was ‘expressions’ and our speakers shared using poetry, music, story, personal narrative and art.

GSS staff continues to employ a mix of paid people, volunteers and students on placement. We currently have three students on placement, four volunteers and eight paid staff. I am most grateful for the commitment, care and collegiality provided by all of our staff; it makes Grief Support Services a nice place to be for both clients and staff. Many thanks to each one of you for all you bring to our Service.

In this this financial year GSS has held the most counselling sessions to date. We are grateful and give our thanks to the funders and members of the community who continue to support our work and have enabled this growth. You will find figures and graphs and acknowledgement of each of our funders below.

Finally, I would like to thank our Board who volunteer their time and considerable skills overseeing that Grief Support Services remains relevant to community needs and is equipped to meeting them.

Janet Baird

Service Manager / Senior Counsellor

Grateful thanks to our clients who have generously made donations to our Service and to our funders, listed below, for supporting this work.

